



Department of Justice

United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott
Eastern District of California

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AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER INDICTED FOR PRODUCING, TRAFFICKING, AND POSSESSING CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

FRESNO, Calif.—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a grand jury in Fresno returned an indictment against JAMES VINCENT THORSON, 45, of Fresno, charging him with one count of sexual exploitation of a minor, one count of trafficking child pornography, and two counts of possessing material involving the sexual exploitation of minors. The indictment also seeks to forfeit items used in connection with the commission of the offenses.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Fresno Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force. An investigation related to the possible sexual abuse of minors is currently being conducted by the Fresno County Sheriff's Department. Anyone with information that might assist that investigation is urged to contact Fresno County Sheriff's Office Sexual Abuse Unit Sergeant Kevin Smith at 559-488-3901 or Detective Andrea McCormick at 559-488-3747.

According to Assistant United States Attorney David Gappa, who is prosecuting the case, the indictment alleges that on December 11, 2008, THORSON knowingly used a minor to produce a visual depiction of that minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct. It also alleges that he knowingly trafficked in child pornography from December 2006 through December 15, 2008.

THORSON came to law enforcement attention after the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children notified the Fresno ICAC that someone using the name "Youngurges" had uploaded numerous images of child pornography to the Web site Photobucket. A search warrant for the residence associated with the user of this account was executed on December 16, 2008. During an interview with law enforcement agents, THORSON admitted that he had uploaded images of child pornography to a Photobucket account. He also admitted that he has used the peer-to-peer file-sharing program Limewire to exchange images of child pornography. He said that he knew this conduct was illegal but that it was not a "big deal," and that child pornography laws are too severe and need to be "tweaked." THORSON stated that he frequently photographs young girls, and he has had a goal of becoming a professional photographer.

"We are extremely concerned about the possibility there may be more young victims in this case who have not yet been identified and we continue to assist the Fresno County Sheriff's Department with that aspect of the investigation," said Brian Poulsen, resident agent in charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Fresno. "The suspicion that this defendant used his photography skills to gain access to young people and engender the trust of their parents is particularly disturbing. Some predators mistakenly believe the anonymity of cyberspace shields them from scrutiny, when in fact, it gives us new tools in our enforcement efforts to protect children."

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

THORSON was ordered detained as danger to the community this afternoon. His next court date is January 26, 2009 at 9:00 a.m.

If convicted of the charges, THORSON faces a maximum of 30 years in prison, a potential fine of \$250,000, and lifetime term of supervised release. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

Charges in an indictment are only allegations, and a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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